News release

UK scientist awarded top Japanese prize

12 January 2006

Sir John Houghton CBE FRS, a former Chief Executive of the Met Office, has been awarded the prestigious Japan Prize for his original and outstanding achievements in science.

The prize, in the category of 'Global Change', presented by the Science and Technology Foundation of Japan, acknowledges Sir John's pioneering research on atmospheric structure and composition based on his satellite observation technology and for promotion of international understanding of climate change.

In particular, during the 1970s at Oxford University, he made crucial contributions to the development of new ways of making observations from Earth-orbiting satellites of the temperature and composition of the upper atmosphere. This led to better understanding of the influence of human activities on the climate and on the ozone layer.

More recently he played a central role in the development of international understanding of the science of climate change through his chairmanship of the scientific assessments under the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Sir John says of the award: "This has come as a wonderful surprise. I feel most honoured to be nominated for such a prestigious prize. I salute also all those scientists who have worked with me over the past forty years as we have sought better understanding of the whole climate system and human influences upon it."

Notes:

The Japan Prize is awarded in two categories each year following nominations from up to 5,000 scientists around the world. For 2006 the categories were 'Global change' and 'The development of novel therapeutic concepts and technologies'. The prize in the second category has been awarded to Dr Akira Endo of Japan.

Sir John has held the following positions:

Chairman of the Scientific Assessment for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change from 1988-2002.
Chairman of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (1992-1998).
Chief Executive of the Meteorological Office (1983-1991).
Professor of Atmospheric Physics, University of Oxford (1976-1983)

Sir John is currently chairman of the John Ray Initiative, a Trustee of the Shell Foundation and Honorary Scientist at the Met Office Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research.

For further information:
Met Office Press Office +44 (0)1392 886655
E-mail: pressoffice@metoffice.gov.uk

Met Office Customer Centre 0870 900 0100
If you're outside the UK +44 (0)1392 885680

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